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SLOW PROGRESS MADE IN MECHANIZATION OF SOVIET PEAT INDUSTRY

Information contained in this report was extracted from various articles in the April 1951 issues of Torfyanaya Promyshlennost' and Mekhanizatsiya Trudoyemkikh i Tyazhelykh Rabot.

The Soviet peat industry, which showed a production increase of 58 percent during the Fourth Five-Year Plan, paid much attention to the problem of mechanizing peat-production processes during 1940-50, particularly from 1946 to 1950. Some successes have been achieved, but certain parts of the industry remain exceedingly backward. This is evidenced by the wide range in production indexes between peat enterprises of various ministries and among various enterprises within a ministry.

The peat enterprises of the Ministry of Local Fuel Industry RSFSR have a low level of mechanization: in 1950, 75 percent of the peat was extracted by elevator and manual cutting methods. Nonmechanized methods were also predominant in peat enterprises of the Ministry of Light Industry USSR, Ministry of Timber Industry USSR, Ministry of Local Fuel Industry Ukrainian SSR, and several other ministries. In 1950, peat enterprises of the Ministry of Light Industry USSR using the excavator method had mechanized peat extraction 47.5 percent, peat gathering 1 percent, peat loading 1.9 percent; peat spreading was not mechanized at all. At present, 6.5 percent of the peat is still manually cut in enterprises of this ministry. Enterprises of the Ministry of Local Fuel Industry RSFSR produced 73 percent of their peat by semimechanized methods and 23.5 percent by manual cutting, while spreading and loading were not mechanized at all. Many ministries pay little attention to mechanizing their peat enterprises since they consider peat extraction an unimportant secondary operation.

There are several reasons for the lack of mechanization in these ministries:

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1. The ministries' machine-building plants are not filling the peat enterprise requirements. Meanwhile some ministries, such as the Ministries of Local Fuel Industry RSFSR, Ukrainian SSR, and Belorussian SSR, have plants capable of filling not only the requirements of their own enterprises but also those of other ministries which do not have their own machine-building plants.

2. Many enterprises do not fully utilize their machines and continue to do secondary operations manually.

3. Scientific research institutes of the peat industry have not produced the proper machinery for some production processes. For example, the industry needs machines for gathering or loading peat at nonelectrified enterprises and for drying peat at electrified enterprises.

4. Some peat enterprises, including many of the Ministry of Electric Power Stations, employ too many workers both for productional and nonproductional labor, thus retarding otherwise probable increases in labor productivity. The maximum average production per yearly worker during 1950 at the Kobrino, Pikinskiy, and Sinyavinskiy peat enterprises of the Ministry of Electric Power Stations was 489, 382, 346, and 337 tons, respectively, while the completely mechanized Tootsi Peat Enterprise of the Ministry of Chemical and Shale Industry, Estonian SSR, produces an average of 600 tons per worker or as much as 932 tons per productional worker.

In the peat industry's mechanization program, the peat-production methods which best lent themselves to mechanization were stressed. Experiments were carried out at peat experimental stations and in many peat enterprises and trusts. The milled peat method proved most suitable for mechanization, the elevator method the least. As a result, utilization of the elevator method for peat extraction dropped from 30.1 percent of the total production in 1940 to 20.6 percent in 1950 and manual cutting decreased from 18.8 to 11.4 percent, whereas use of the excavator method increased from 3 to 16.7 percent of the total production in this period and the milled-peat method increased from 16 to 23.2 percent.

Secondary operations of the peat enterprises also showed some increases in mechanization. Excavation work was mechanized 68.2 percent in 1950, as against 51.3 percent in 1940; drying peat 22.2 percent, as against 11.6 percent; and loading peat 48 percent, as against 12.8 percent.

While the most effective peat-extraction methods were being selected and tried, the machines which determined these methods were undergoing development and trial. Many new machines were developed during the Fourth Five-Year Plan: FK-4 and FD-4a drum milling machines, VMF turning machines, VUF piling machines, UMPF-4 gathering machines, OF-3 storing machines, TEMP and VEP peat-excavating machines, TE-2 and E-351 excavators for field preparation and secondary operations, electric spreader machines, drain-digging machines and others.

The milled peat gathering machine required and received priority treatment during the Fourth Five-Year Plan and the standard UMPF-4 gathering machine was developed for this difficult operation. Although this machine proved quite successful, the more recent FTK gathering machine, produced and used by the Tootsi Peat Enterprise, has proven superior in a series of tests conducted at the latter enterprise. Moreover, the recently tested (1950) PUM pneumatic peat combine has proven more effective than the UMPF-4, and, therefore, will probably take its place. This machine eliminates the turning, piling, and storing operations and produces peat with a lower moisture content and a better texture.

Glavtorf (Main Administration of the Peat Industry) of the Ministry of Electric Power Stations, which completed its 1946 - 1950 Plan 100.7 percent for extracted peat and 100.1 percent for dried peat, had much higher mechanization indexes than had the peat industry generally as is shown in the following table.

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Mechanization of Peat Industry

	Milled Method (%)	Excavator Method (%)	Elevator Method (%)	Manually Cut (%)
USSR peat industry 1940	16.0	3.0	30.1	18.8
USSR peat industry 1950	23.2	16.7	20.6	11.4
Glavtorf, 1940	3.6	--	7.8	--
Glavtorf, 1950	63	--	1.7	None

In Glavtorf, over 98 percent of all peat produced in 1950 was obtained by the milled, dredge, and hydropeat methods as against 92 percent in 1940. Use of the elevator production method, which is the most time-consuming of the different methods, was decreased from 7 8 percent in 1940 to 1.7 percent in 1950 and no peat was cut manually. The most significant increase was the one made in extracting peat by the milled peat method. Many new-type machines were developed for this method, making it possible to increase its relative importance from 3.6 percent of the total production in 1940 to 63 percent in 1950. The first milled peat enterprises of Glavtorf reached complete mechanization in 1949. In 1950, there were 18 such enterprises and in 1951 it is planned to mechanize an additional 33 enterprises. Labor productivity in the above enterprises is 1.5 to 2 times higher than in peat enterprises of the Ministry of Electric Power Stations as a whole.

VNIITP (All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Peat Industry) received large sums for the purpose of developing peat machinery during the Fourth Five-Year Plan. Twenty-six percent of these funds were used to develop hydropeat methods, 22 percent milled peat methods, 8 percent excavator peat methods, 12 percent artificial dehydration of peat, 8 percent on heat and mechanical treatment of peat, 8 percent for perfecting loading and transporting peat, 8 percent research on preparing peat deposits, and 14 percent for other work.

Although the institute has accomplished much, it has not yet answered some important problems satisfactorily. For example, a mechanized drying process for lump peat, an uninterrupted process for dehydrating peat, mechanized methods for laying and relaying track, and other problems are outstanding. The latter problem was somewhat taken care of by individual enterprises and trusts which made the machinery for this operation in their own machine shops. VNIITP also gave little help in developing means of artificial dehydration and problems concerning economies of production were not satisfactorily worked out.

The increase in mechanization during 1946 - 1950 made it possible for Glavtorf to increase peat production 27.5 percent and to cut down on the number of average yearly workers by 16,000, thus increasing output per worker 50.4 percent. However, Glavtorf did not complete its 1950 plan for producing peat. Its plan for total peat extraction was 96.2 percent completed, for dried peat 88.3 percent. The output per worker reached only 95.8 percent, and the production cost of peat was 6.5 percent higher than planned. Eighty percent of the plan for mechanized gathering of milled peat was fulfilled, and the plan for semimechanized gathering of lump peat was only 42.8 percent completed. The Yaroslavl', Ivanov, Kalinin, and Kirov peat trusts were the worst offenders, the Kirov Trust completing only 50.4 (%) of its plan for finished peat, and the Yaroslavl' Trust only 56.6 percent. Two individual peat enterprises had especially low indexes: the Podozerskiy Peat Enterprise completed only 39.6 percent of its plan, the Zenginskiy Enterprise only 14.9 percent.

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This poor showing in 1950 was partly due to poor weather conditions but more to the poor preparation for the peat season, poor work organization, inefficient use of existing machinery, and poor management. Several construction and installation administrations of Glavtorfostroy were also responsible for the nonfulfillment of the 1950 plan. They did not prepare milled peat fields for the peat enterprises as called for by the 1950 plan. For example, the construction organizations of the Zenginskiy Peat Enterprise (former chief, Ageyev) prepared only 32.5 percent of its fields in 1950; those of the Chisto-Borskiy enterprise (former chief, Matskevich), 30 percent; and those of the Pel'gorskiy enterprise (chief, Filippov), 30.9 percent.

The Kuznetsk Plant of Glavtorfmash was responsible for the peat industry not completing its 1950 year plan for gathering lump peat because it did not supply the industry with the much-needed UkB gathering machines.

The Yaroslavl', Ivanov, Kalinin, and Kirov Peat trusts were sharply criticized by a collegium of the Ministry of the Electric Power Stations for falling so far behind the 1950 plan. Some trusts are lagging behind the plan in readying their fields for the 1951 season.

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